



Tom Lantos

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER**

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Lantos Lauds Manteca Civic Officials for Standing Up to Chinese Pressure Against Film

Washington, DC – Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA), a leading U.S. figure in human rights, today praised the sponsors of a northern California film festival for spurning a Chinese government attempt to block the screening of a prize-winning movie about persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.

“China’s leadership needs to recognize that successful societies in the modern world are eager to foster freedom of speech and religion,” said Lantos, the ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee and co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. “Congress will continue sending that message until it is clearly understood. Meantime, the civic leaders backing the Delta Film Festival are to be congratulated for holding fast, politely but firmly resisting Chinese consular authorities’ attempts to suppress free speech in Manteca.”

Authorities from the China’s San Francisco consulate traveled to Manteca to ask officials from its convention and visitors bureau and film commission not to allow the Canadian film “Sandstorm,” which depicts the torture and abuse of a Falun Gong follower, to be shown in the festival Saturday. The 76-minute Canadian feature won the Best Feature Film prize earlier this year at the Philadelphia Film Festival, and gained similar honors at festivals in Oklahoma City and Tampa. Chinese officials also had tried to block the film’s screening at the Philadelphia festival.

On October 4, the House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill co-sponsored by Lantos that calls on the Chinese government to stop interfering in the exercise of religious and political freedoms within the United States, to cease using diplomatic missions in this country to spread falsehoods about Falun Gong, and to stop persecuting Falun Gong practitioners in China. It lists several recent incidents of harassment by members of China’s diplomatic corps against Falun Gong figures in this country. Further information about the bill, known as H. Con. Res. 304, can be found at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

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